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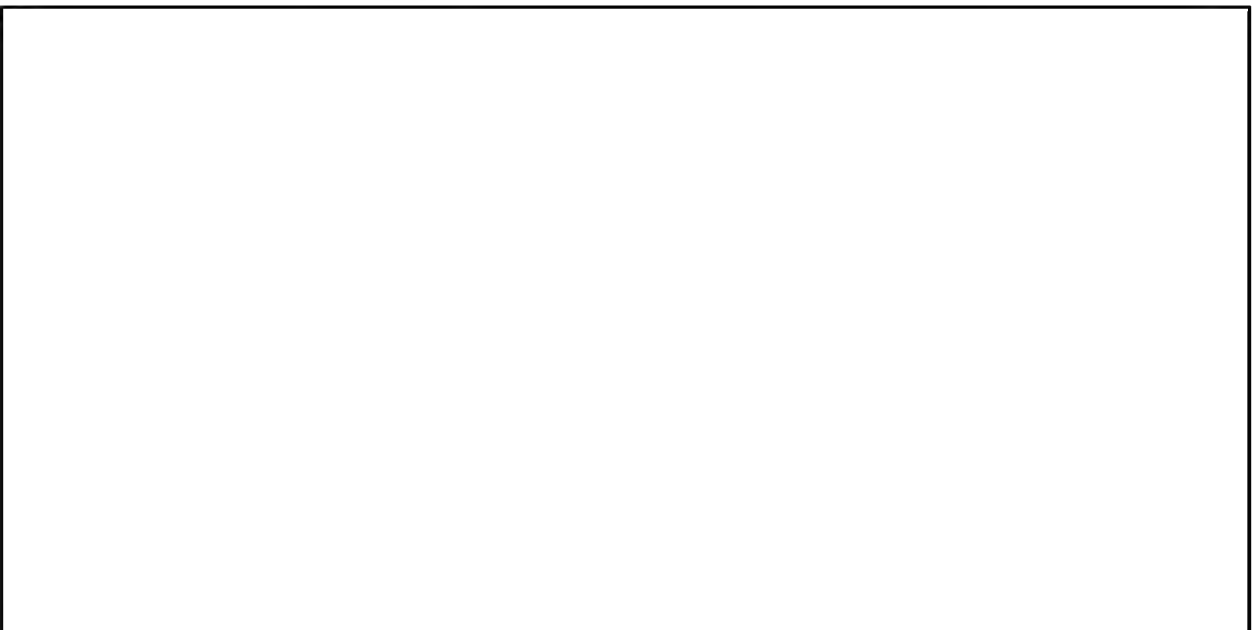
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CHINA - WEST GERMANY: The Chinese are approaching the question of normalizing relations with Bonn with an eye toward the German domestic political situation.

In their first major overture to West Germany, the Chinese chose to ignore probes made earlier this year by the Brandt government's foreign minister for an invitation to Peking, and instead invited Gerhard Schroeder, a ranking member of the opposition Christian Democratic Party. Schroeder has just completed a visit to Peking and his warm reception has been

[redacted] indicative of China's preference for the Christian Democrats over Brandt's Socialists.

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Peking's preference for the Christian Democrats derives from its interest in offsetting Soviet influence in Europe--an interest the Chinese do not think is advanced by Brandt's Ostpolitik. Since Christian Democrats have warned Brandt against the dangers of moving too far and too fast in dealing with the USSR and have suggested that Bonn normalize relations with Peking and thereby "play the Chinese card" in the diplomatic game with Moscow, Peking probably reasons that its leverage would be increased at least to some extent should the Christian Democrats come to power.

Despite these considerations, Peking will undoubtedly be careful to avoid any action that would preclude dealing with Brandt should the elections go in his favor. While tactically the Chinese may see some value in adopting a wait-and-see attitude until after the elections, Peking, regardless of

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which party holds power, almost certainly favors fairly early normalization of relations with Bonn, its largest trading partner in Western Europe and the major economic power within the European Community. Indeed, Peking's expressed preference for the Christian Democrats does not necessarily preclude the opening of private and unofficial Sino-German talks even prior to the conclusion of the elections.

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